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SUBJECT: VATICAN: EAST TIMORESE ACTIVIST CALLS FOR ATTENTION

¶1. (SBU) Fernanda Borges, the founder of East Timor's National Party, was in Rome recently pleading for greater international attention to the disorder and violence in her country. We met with Borges at the headquarters of the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Catholic lay group best known for conflict resolution and HIV/AIDS work in Africa that was hosting her. Borges told us she was a former government minister who had also worked for the East Timor Bishops Conference. She said she didn't like the direction of the current government and that her party aimed to rectify the situation by more accurately representing the will of the people. "The people don't feel the government represents them," she claimed. Borges criticized the corruption and lack of accountability of local governments in East Timor and called for a better educational system, particularly at the post-secondary level.

¶2. (SBU) Borges said she enjoyed close contact with the U.S. and Australian embassies in Dili, and made a convincing case for why East Timor "should still matter" to the U.S. and others. Her connections with Sant'Egidio are worthy of note. We understand the Community currently has little or no presence in East Timor, but with an active Catholic Church and such a high percentage of believers, the nation could be fertile ground for the movement. Sant'Egidio stays out of politics, but is active on migration, poverty, and health issues, in addition to maintaining an active portfolio on inter-religious dialogue and conflict-resolution efforts.

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